

Roman Literature and Poetry

For Romans, the ability to read and write was considered a valuable skill and there were no barriers to their learning if they were able to find someone to teach them. Books were expensive and rare since they were hand copied one at a time. Scribes copied originals or other copies on sheets of papyrus, which were then glued together and rolled onto spindles. A school was lucky to have a single copy of a work, and students memorized classic passages and made their own copies.

The Romans had many talented writers and poets that lived throughout this time period. Gnaeus Naevius was one of the first great Roman authors who wrote stories retelling the events of the Punic War. Another famous master of writing was named Cicero. He is considered one of the greatest masters of the Latin language. He wrote a series of stories that told about the lives of the upper classes of the Romans. Lastly, there was Virgil. This author mainly focused on writing poetry and wrote one of the best known poems explaining about the lives of the lower class citizens.

Roman poetry and literature had a major impact on the daily lives of its citizens and overall Roman society. Roman literature included essays, history books, poems, and plays that were written in the Latin language.

Romans enjoyed reading and retelling stories that often had a “moral” to the stories. They were intended to teach about making the right choices or warn against foolishness, often the dangers of angering the gods. Roman literature is also famous for a large number of plays that were written during this time period.

Just like today, Romans enjoyed reading literature from many different genres. The many stories, poems, and plays provided them with entertainment and encouraged them to learn new things. It also was a way to learn about their own history as well as current events that were happening during their lifetime.